

Testimony of
Dick Monahan
American Quarter Horse Association
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation
Thoroughbred Horse Racing Jockeys and Workers: Examining
On-Track Injury Insurance and Other Health and Welfare Issues
November 17, 2005

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to appear at this hearing on behalf of the American Quarter Horse Association. I am Dick Monahan, Chair of the AQHA's Racing Council.

I have been involved in American Quarter Horse Racing as an owner and breeder since 1970. Since 1975 I have been involved in the management of small racetracks in eastern Washington.

I am currently an AQHA National Director and Chairman of the AQHA Racing Committee, a 90-member oversight committee, and the Racing Council, a 9-member steering committee.

I am a trial lawyer in Walla Walla, Washington to pay for my horse habit. Issues involving the health and welfare of jockeys and other workers at racetracks are of utmost importance to AQHA and AQHA members involved in racing.

Just what is an American Quarter Horse? If you have ever seen a horse in one of rodeo's timed events, been along for work on a ranch or watched a Western on the big or small screen, 9 times out of 10 you have witnessed an American Quarter Horse.

These heavily muscled, compact horses could and can run a short distance over a straightaway faster than any other horse,, The fastest were called Celebrated American Quarter Running Horses by English colonists in the 1600s.

The American Quarter Horse established a reputation as the greatest cattle roundup and trail driving horse in history and were also popular with early American racing enthusiasts. To ensure the unique qualities of this breed be preserved, a group of American Quarter Horse enthusiasts met in Ft. Worth, Texas in 1940 to establish what has to become the largest equine breed registry in the world, the American Quarter Horse Association.

Located in Amarillo, Texas, AQHA remains the world's largest equine Association, registering more than 4.5 million American Quarter Horses and serving more than 350,000 worldwide members. The Association has more than 1.2 million active owners.

AQHA functions as the official record keeping and governing body of the American Quarter Horse industry. AQHA records all American Quarter Horse ownership, processes, approved show and race results, catalogs performance and produce data on all American Quarter Horses, maintains association funds and publicizes the American Quarter Horse industry through three magazines.

In addition, AQHA maintains current statistics on ownership in each state and country as well as American Quarter Horse population figures. With nearly 161,000 new registrations in 2004, AQHA's role in preserving the integrity of the breed is expanding on a daily basis. Whether American Quarter Horses are still being used in traditional ranching operations, for showing, racing or pleasure, AQHA strives to provide services beneficial to all Association members and ultimately the American Quarter Horse.

AQHA MISSION STATEMENT

- * To record and preserve the pedigrees of the American Quarter Horse while maintaining the integrity of the breed.
- * To provide beneficial services for its members that enhances and encourages American Quarter Horse ownership and participation.
- * To develop diverse educational programs, material and curriculum that will position AQHA as the leading resource organization in the equine industry.
- * To generate growth of AQHA membership via the marketing, promotion, advertising and publicity of the American Quarter Horse.

AQHA Racing Mission Statement

- * To insure the long-term viability of American Quarter Horse racing by increasing racing opportunities and developing, as well as retaining, new owners in state and international venues.
- * To record complete race results, records, past performance information and related racing statistics for the American Quarter Horse racing industry.
- * To recognize the worthwhile achievements of American Quarter Horses in racing.

AQHA supports and promotes American Quarter Horse racing, which is authorized in twenty-five states, although a good portion of that is at state and county fairs with only a few days of racing at each fair.

According to the recently completed study by the American Horse Council, the *National Economic Impact of the Horse Industry on the United States*, American Quarter Horses make up approximately 15% of the 845,000 horses racing or breeding for racing in the U.S. and account for about 6% of the \$10.7 billion dollars direct economic impact of racing in the U.S. About \$340 million is wagered each year on American Quarter Horse racing.

I share these figures so that the Committee will understand where American Quarter Horse racing fits within the horse racing industry in the U.S. While we are not a large segment of the racing industry, the leadership role AQHA plays in the industry is vital. We are committed to the safety of the jockeys, exercise riders, other back stretch workers and the horses involved in our product. AQHA has always done its part to benefit all of horse racing and those who participate, and the membership stands ready to do so now.

Over the years the AQHA Racing Committee and Council has discussed track safety and issues to insure the safety and fairness of racing. Since 2002 alone, AQHA has invested more than \$600,000 working with other industry associations on various issues such as: 1. Racetrack Surface Study to determine the effects of various surfaces on horses legs and how to reduce or eliminate catastrophic injuries, 2. The Racing Medication and Testing Consortium whose mission is to develop, promote and coordinate, at the national level, policies, research, and educational programs which seek to ensure the fairness and integrity of racing and the health and welfare of racehorses and participants, and protect the interests of the betting public” and 3. Conducting assistant

starter workshops to assist gate workers with properly handling horses behind and in the gate to protect horses, jockeys and the wagering public to insure safety and fairness.

Since 1960, and thanks in large part to its generous members, AQHA and the American Quarter Horse Foundation has contributed more than five million dollars in research grants to colleges and universities to study various issues and diseases that affect all breeds of horses, not only racing American Quarter Horses.

Today, there are no racetracks that exclusively offer American Quarter Horse racing. Instead, it is offered in a mixed format with other breeds, primarily Thoroughbreds, American Paint Horses and Arabians.

With respect to the jockeys and exercise riders, almost all of those who ride American Quarter Horses also ride other breeds. For this reason, they are included in any agreements reached regarding insurance, be it health insurance or catastrophic insurance and any jockey can join the Jockeys' Guild who chooses to do so.

AQHA has never been directly involved in the negotiations that produced agreements regarding insurance in the past. Rather we have relied on the Jockeys' Guild and the Thoroughbred Racing Association to finalize such agreements. This does not indicate any lack of interest or concern, only recognition that other organizations were able to reach acceptable agreements in the past that include American Quarter Horse racing. We have always participated in and utilized the final product and appreciated the efforts of all concerned to protect these individuals.

As did many others, we watched with concern as the leadership of the Jockeys' Guild changed, causing a strain in the traditional processes and relationships. As the Committee has learned, the path to the current situation in the racing industry regarding

the protection of our jockeys has been very unfortunate. But we do not believe that it is permanent.

Efforts to resolve this issue were started some time ago and a great deal of work has gone into it. We are confident that the industry can resolve this issue as it has done in the past. The will always has been there, but new circumstances have changed the regular order. We believe that this too will change and that the previous order will be restored.

The industry makes every effort to make racing as safe as possible. Racing surfaces are groomed between every race to keep surfaces in the best shape. Races are cancelled when conditions, weather or jockeys raise concerns. New surfaces are being explored and used - all the time.

At AQHA, we believe these issues can be resolved by the industry by working together. The process has begun, carriers have been contacted, and the industry is working on a resolution. That may involve a new paradigm, but it will happen and AQHA will be involved.

We appreciate your Committee's involvement in this important process. Clearly it has already spurred some changes. We expect that such changes will continue and that jockeys and other workers will be protected and insured as before, if not better.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to participate in these hearings.